

Dissonant Voices

Geography of Fear



Description and Resources

Our 3-day institute will introduce and/or acquaint you with place-based and inquiry learning in national parks. Our goal is to provide you with practical and useful ideas for implementing Social Studies field-based education through learning activities and research or service projects.

Our institute is framed by the essential question “How does fear shape our landscape?” We have chosen topics that are rooted in areas of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area but are emblematic of larger social issues. The institute will be held at the Presidio of San Francisco, Alcatraz Island, the Marin Headlands, and Fort Mason.

Day 1 - Tuesday Morning Fort Mason, San Francisco

Session #1: Setting the Stage for Place-based Historic Inquiry

Pedagogy of place and inquiry methods is at the heart of the institute. Daisy Martin, the Co-Director of the National History Education Clearinghouse, and Associate Director of Historical Thinking Matters at Stanford University, will set the stage with a discussion of how historic inquiry and issues-based teaching can provoke students to pose meaningful questions, apply critical thinking skills, and build their own interpretations of local, national, and international events.

Session#2: Executive order 9066 – Confining Neighbors and Citizens

In the face of potential threats to national security, how should a citizenry respond? Rosalyn Tonai of the National Japanese American Historical Society and Japanese American former wartime internees will present their perspectives on the Japanese American experience at the Presidio. Join us in a thought-provoking discussion about fear, tolerance, and civil liberties in the context of war and community dislocation.

Tuesday Afternoon Presidio of San Francisco

Session #3: Uprooting Chinatown

When does racism masquerade as public health? In the late 1800s and early 1900s, San Francisco’s power elite made several attempts to remove the Chinese community and their places of cultural significance to areas far from the city center. The most-often reason quoted for the proposed uprooting of the Chinese community was public health. Join Park Ranger Roxi Farwell in this session as we examine three examples of public health issues that were thinly-veiled racist policies. Is the experience of the Chinese in San Francisco over a hundred years ago similar to experiences of other disenfranchised Americans today?

Session #4: Honorable Duty

How did American foreign policy expand the landscape of fear abroad? The moral dilemma of the African American Buffalo Soldiers during the Spanish American War and the War for Independence in the Philippines explores the fear and dehumanization of Other during America’s expansion into the Pacific. Rik Penn, Park Ranger, takes us through the Presidio National Cemetery where over 450 Buffalo Soldiers are buried.

Day 2 – Wednesday
Alcatraz Island

Session #1: American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Through the Eyes of Women

How does gender influence the memory and telling of political events? Miho Aida, the director of the new video documentary, Alcatraz - The Rock That Hit The Water, brings voices of 12 American Indian women whose lives have been transformed through the 1969 Alcatraz Occupation. Miho and two women in the video, Shirley and Kris, will screen the video and share their perspectives of the event and its living legacy.

Session #2: Hopi Prisoners on the Rock

What is the military’s relationship to “domestic dependent nations”? Alcatraz Island played an auspicious role in the lives of 19 Hopi men who spent nearly a year imprisoned for refusing the “civilized ways of the white men.” The story centers on the Hopi refusal to send their children away to boarding schools and staunch resistance to land allotment programs. Park Ranger Craig Glassner recounts the reception waiting for them at the island while it was a military prison.

Session #3: Prisoners and Politics on the Rock

What is the role of exile in controlling political debate? Alcatraz Island housed political prisoners such as Phillip Grosser, anarchist and anti-militarist opposed to World War I, and Morten Sobell, sent in the 1950s on conspiracy charges stemming from the Rosenberg spy trial. Robert Lipscomb, incarcerated on criminal charges and later sent to Alcatraz for being an agitator, challenged federal rules of segregation within the prison walls. Park Ranger Benny Batom shares these stories as he leads us through the penitentiary, including the dungeon below.

Session#4: Alcatraz in the Civil War--Military Fortress or Political Prison?

What is the nature of loyalty in time of civil war? While more famous battles and events unfolded back east, Alcatraz was a powerful fortress guarding San Francisco Bay during the Civil War. But just as menacing as its scores of cannon was its role as a military prison. The island became a symbol of determination to keep California in the Union at whatever cost, as the lines became blurred between punishment for taking action on behalf of the rebellion and repression of any expression of sympathy with the Southern cause, raising the issue: What are the limits of dissent during wartime? Join Steve Haller, Park Historian, in this interesting debate.

Day 3 – Thursday Morning
Nike Missile Site

Session #1: Nuclear Reactions: Atomic Diplomacy at the Marin Headlands

How do we protect both our borders and our ideals? This field session showcases the only Cold War Nike missile site named a National Historic Site. Nestled in the verdant Marin hillside, the Nike site sat next to a vibrant urban landscape. We will investigate the site as we contemplate the role of nuclear power – then and now. John Porter, NPS Nike Missile Site Manager, will provide the historic context.

Session #2: Putting the Pieces Together - Conclusion

Daisy Martin will present a session on how to augment the traditional textbook learning with multiple sources drawn from historic sites. She will facilitate a hands-on session in which participants will design elements of a place-based lesson using the information and strategies garnered during the three days.